freeing 714 items from import licencing restriction; and

(b) if so, what steps Government have taken to ensure to protect our Industries?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) and (b) India has been following a consistent policy for gradual removal of restrictions on imports since 1991. Tariff line-wise import policy was first announced on 31-3-1996 and as on that date, import of 6161 tariff lines (at 10 digit level) out of the total number of 10202 was free. Import restrictions on 488 tariff lines were removed during the period 1-4-96 to 31-3-97. Further 391 tariff lines (at 8 digit level) were freed during the period 1-4-98 to 13-4-98 and 894 tariff lines were freed on 1-4-99. Thus removal of import restrictions on 714 tariff lines as carried out on 31-3-2000 was in continuation of the stated policy of the Government over the years. All these items have been freely importable from SAARC Countries since 1-8-98.

All imports in the country are subject to applicable rates of Customs duties and also subject to domestic laws, rules, orders, regulations, technical specifications and environmental and safety norms as applicable to domestically produced goods. This should provide adequate protection to the domestic industry.

The imports are being closely monitored and Government would strive to ensure through appropriate use of the tariff mechanism that imports do not cause any serious detriment or injury to the domestic industry.

Setting up of Special Economic Zones

†3079. SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH :
SHRI KAPIL SIBAL :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have decided to set up Special Economic Zones under the new Exim policy;

(b) if so, the total number of such zones decided to be set up;

(c) the estimated expenditure which will be made for setting up each zone; and

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(d) the target for the export out of the total export of the country from all of such zones?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) to (c) In the Export and Import Policy (1997—2002) incorporating amendments made upto 31st March, 2000, Government has announced a Policy for setting up of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the country. There is no proposal to set up any new SEZ by the Central Government. However, some of the existing Export Processing Zones, where suitable infrastructure already exists, are proposed to be converted into SEZs.

(d) No target has been set for export from the SEZs.

FDI in Retail Trade Sector

3080. SHRI AMAR SINGH :
SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have received any communication from the Federation of Associations of Maharashtra and Mumbai regarding Foreign Direct Investment in Retail Trade Sector;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what action Government have taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN) : (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Federation of Associations of Maharashtra has represented against allowing Foreign Direct Investment in Retail Trading Sector on the ground that India is not under obligation to open retail trade sector under GATT.

As per current policy, the Government is not encouraging Foreign Direct Investment in Retail Sector.